



# Reading First *Lighthouse School*

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**Mary C. O'Brien Elementary  
Mary C. O'Brien District  
Pinal County**

The hallmark for success at this small, rural school is leadership. Nestled in Pinal's accommodation school district, county leaders determined that quality of instruction was the key to success. As a result, Mary C. O'Brien Elementary offers competitive salaries, small teacher – student ratios, and support staff to attract and to retain high quality teachers. While staff changes are minimal, instructional changes are constant—and so is the upward trend in data. AIMS third grade reading scores soared from 69% passing in 2006 to 87% passing in 2008.

Implementing foundational changes began the year before receiving the Reading First Grant. That year, Principal Valerie Gorodensky led the staff in adopting a researched based core curriculum and in training on DIBELS assessments. Now, the staff's understanding of best practices is transforming the day to day activities at MCOB. When a new principal, Arlisa Crank-Townsend, took the helm this fall, she brought high expectations and was met with teachers who were well equipped to explain and continue their reading culture.

The campus is all about the individual student, and staff data collaboration serves as the scope to keep that focus in sight. At the beginning of their third year in Reading First, the school's only intensive students in K-3 were the new Kindergarteners. Accordingly, for many second and third graders, the instructional emphasis shifted to student needs of vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. Considering the correlation to AIMS, teachers set DIBELS benchmark goals for percentages of students to reach the 50<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. The large data board in the intervention room is a constant reminder of each student's progress.

Coach Jackie Mims supports teachers as they navigate their instruction by providing data folders. These files provide a one- stop organizer at teacher's fingertips, containing student scores and all the materials necessary to administer assessments. Included are progress monitoring graphs and recording sheets for key assessments: DIBELS, core comprehension, high frequency words, intervention programs, and diagnostic screeners. Referencing data at grade level and staff meetings allows the staff to track student growth--reflecting on challenges and celebrating successes. The learning continues for everyone as this group embraces flexibility, the latest research, and collective experience.